

## Racquel Rowe: Straddling the Line of Places and Cultures

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, Nova Scotia (June 2023) – Artist Racquel Rowe's work encapsulates her lived experience as a Black woman from Barbados who moved to a small city in Ontario. “The Chicken Is Just Dead First”, is a euphemism for the differences between island life and North America and the title of her upcoming exhibition at ARTSPACE Gallery.

“Leaving my predominantly Black country of origin at the age of 18 had a profound effect on me; I was not ‘othered’ until I moved to Canada, it’s strange to become a minority in one’s adult life,” says Rowe.

“I quickly learned that many people have preconceived notions of what living in a ‘tropical paradise’ is like, and this pushed me to create artworks with a distinctly Caribbean setting, using contexts that were deliberately not intended for a ‘Canadian’ audience,” Rowe explains.

“The works in the exhibition at the ARTSPACE Main Gallery range from solo performance pieces featuring Rowe undertaking various culturally specific tasks, such as taking out her braids or washing rice, as well as pieces that involve the matriarchs of her family, where she plays a supporting role as they either care for her or teach her how to make certain recipes,” said Sophie Paskins, Gallery Director.

The chicken is just dead first is a phrase borrowed from Zaliqa Reid-Benta’s collection “Frying Plantain”, a collection of short stories about the complexities of a first generation Jamaican-Canadian growing up in Toronto. Rowe’s exhibition features work made between Canada and Barbados. Like the protagonists in Zaliqa Reid-Benta's stories, Rowe found herself in the position of slowly beginning to blend aspects of Barbadian and Canadian cultures—first starting with food—and this blending resulted in her growing body of work.

“Racquel’s roots in Barbados are depicted in such a visually compelling way—using video and imagery that celebrates life in the Caribbean and contrasts it with what it means to be Canadian. Ms. Rowe’s art is intended to open up new ways of seeing, her work will stimulate conversations that we should all be having at this time,” said Ted Lind, Exhibition Committee Member.

“My hope is that Black communities and those who do not feel themselves or their cultures regularly represented in the fabric of the ‘Canadian Landscape’ feel a sense of belonging and pick up on cross-cultural similarities or differences, and that my work leads them to a deeper introspection of their own cultural or familial heritages that should be kept alive,” concludes Rowe.

“The Chicken Is Just Dead First” opening reception Sat. June 3, 2023, 12-2pm. Artist Talk 1 pm.  
“The Chicken Is Just Dead First” continues through July 29.

Racquel Rowe is an interdisciplinary artist from the island of Barbados currently residing in

Canada. Rowe calls various places home, most recently Sackville, New Brunswick. She's exhibited across Ontario, the Maritimes, and Montreal, and holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, and a Bachelor of Arts in History and Studio Art from the University of Guelph, Ontario.

ARTSPACE is a public Art Gallery that is operated by the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council, a registered charitable, community organization dedicated to encouraging and promoting the arts. Supported through the Province of Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts.

ARTSPACE Gallery is located at 396 St. George Street in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia  
For more information please contact: [admin@arcac.ca](mailto:admin@arcac.ca)  
(902) 532-7069

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